

Lion's Teeth by **freakwithacamera (assholemurphy)**

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Angst, Fights, First Aid, Homophobia, Hurt/Comfort, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, M/M, Pining, Slurs, billy hargrove exists, jonathan is not as oblivious as steve thinks, lots of cussing, steve's in love, that deserves a tag, vulnerable!jonathan

Language: English

Characters: Jonathan Byers, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-11-18

Updated: 2017-11-18

Packaged: 2022-04-02 14:54:35

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 4,283

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Steve gets into yet another fight with Billy and gets his ass kicked, but it's okay because Jonathan's there to help fix him up afterwards. They talk and Jonathan tells Steve about Lonnie and some of the abuse he went through. Steve's in love with Jonathan, but Jonathan suspects, they're just both too scared to make a move.

Lion's Teeth

Author's Note:

Hey, so I think I'm getting better at characterization, I hope, but let me know if I'm way off.

Lion's Teeth is a song by The Mountain Goats, it's pretty good, you should check it out, but other than the fact that it discusses child abuse, it really doesn't tie into the story, I'm just really bad at coming up with titles.

I've learned that I really like writing both of these two in pain. Steve especially. He's very complex and hides his trauma well.

"God, you're so fucking heavy," Jonathan huffed, half carrying Steve up the staircase.

"That's because of my muscles," Steve told him, trying his best to stand up straight. He'd gotten into yet another fight with Billy fucking Hargrove, jackass extraordinaire and he had the wounds to show for it. He'd gotten his ass well and thoroughly handed to him, too, and if it hadn't been for Jonathan, he'd probably be in the emergency room right now.

Jonathan had been walking by after work at the record store and had come across Steve and Billy in an alley. Jonathan had nearly dropped his camera in his haste to break up the fight. He'd put himself in between them and all but dared Billy to come at him. It had been impressive from what Steve had managed to make out. Apparently, Jonathan had not only threatened to tell Hopper, but he'd threatened to rearrange Billy's face for him. Billy had laughed and made some comment along the lines of 'Look at the fucking queer, protecting his faggoty boyfriend. How cute!' before taking Tommy and Carol and getting the fuck out of there, apparently not willing to call Jonathan's bluff on getting the cops.

Jonathan had grabbed Steve's keys and driven them both to Steve's

house and helped him in the house, not worrying about Steve's parents because it was rare they were ever home. He didn't let go of Steve until he had him placed on the toilet of the bathroom across the hall from his room. He knew for a fact there were first aid supplies in it, though from the look of Steve's face, Jonathan wasn't sure that he could do much to help him.

His eye was swollen and his lip was split in at least two places. He had dark bruises growing on his cheek and jaw, a couple cuts on his face, and a nasty gash on his left cheek where it looked like Billy's class ring had cut him. "Damn."

"What?" Steve asked, wide-eyed and scared. "Is it that bad?"

"Worse. You look like you fell head first into a meat grinder."

"That's a pretty picture. Guess I can't be your model anytime soon," Steve joked.

"Who says you're model material, anyway?" Jonathan snorted, pulling out supplies from under the cabinet and behind the mirror.

"You know, Billy had better watch himself. That racist fucking bastard had better keep to himself if he knows what's good for him. How dare he say those things about Lucas? Just cause he's dating Max doesn't give him any right to be a little bitch about it. That stupid son of a bitch had better fuck off and leave my kids alone," Steve ranted, watching Jonathan struggle to find a clean rag.

"Your kids?" He asked as he finally found a couple hidden under the sink. He'd have to make sure Steve did laundry this weekend. He'd had a rough couple of weeks, with two tests and an essay due, so he'd pretty much neglected to take care of himself. Jonathan would have to remind him that, no, the world was not going to end if he didn't get at least a B on his math test and that, yes, clean clothes were necessary for everyday life.

Steve nodded, "Yeah, they're *my* fucking kids. And Billy had better watch out or-"

"Or what? You'll inconvenience him by bleeding on his shoes?"

“Shut up.” Jonathan was right, but that didn’t mean Steve had to like it.

“You can’t let him get to you.” If Steve would just go into things with a level head, this wouldn’t happen nearly as often.

“He tried to hurt Lucas! Again!” Steve almost shouted. “He threatened to put him in the hospital for being with Max and I just- I just lost it, okay?”

Jonathan paused at that, setting down the bottle of alcohol on the counter. “You need to tell Hopper.”

“And he’ll do what?” Steve had no proof other than word of mouth. He hadn’t actually touched Lucas since that night with the demodogs, but he’d certainly sent Tommy’s younger brother after him and his friends. All Steve could do was give his account of what happened and then Hopper would probably question Max and Lucas and that would only make them more scared and they didn’t need that.

“Scare him off? Keep an eye on him? He’s a cop, Harrington, he’ll be more helpful than you are.”

“Whatever.” Steve hated it when Jonathan used logic. He was right, but that didn’t make him feel any better.

“You can trust Hopper, alright? I do,” Jonathan told him, sincerely. Hopper had always been there for him since his dad – no, since *Lonnie* had left. Hopper had been more of a dad to him than that bastard had ever been.

“Oh, so because you trust him, I should? Because you’re such a great judge of character.” Which was actually truer than not, Jonathan was great at picking out people to trust. Steve just didn’t want to listen to him right now.

“I’m not the one who hung out with Tommy for so fucking long, now am I?” Jonathan tried not to bring that up much. He knew Steve had changed, it was easy to see, but when Steve got snarky, so did Jonathan.

Steve just huffed and slumped his shoulders, resulting in a loud yelp

of pain. He looked at his shoulder in shock. With how bad his face and pride had been hurting, he hadn't even given any thought to the rest of him, but now that he was safe, he could feel the sharp ache coming from it. "What the fuck?"

"What's wrong?" Jonathan asked, concern etched on his face.

"My shoulder, it – agh!" Steve yelled again as he poked at it, trying to figure out exactly what was wrong. It wasn't broken, he didn't think. Maybe he'd hurt the muscle or tore something?

"Don't fucking play with it!" Jonathan scolded, batting his hand away. "Let me see." He leaned in and gently moved the shoulder, apologizing softly when Steve grunted in pain. He sighed and stepped back, "It's dislocated."

"Shit. What now?" Dislocated didn't sound safe. He'd heard about it, but he'd never dislocated anything before, which was lucky, considering how many fights he'd been in.

Jonathan shrugged, "Hospital?" He knew Steve would never go for it, but he had to at least suggest it before they made any irresponsible decisions.

"And have my parents find out I got into *another* fight? Fuck no! My dad would fucking kill me." Steve's dad was a little more than a douchebag, honestly, and Steve didn't want to have to deal with him finding out he went to a fucking hospital because he wasn't man enough to hold his own. Like hell.

After a brief pause, Jonathan sighed, "I could pop it back into place for you, but it'll hurt."

"More than it does now?"

"A lot worse, but only for a moment."

"And then no hospital?" If it meant no hospital, then Steve was willing to endure anything.

"Yeah."

“Then do it.”

Jonathan nodded and moved to take ahold of Steve’s shoulder. “Deep breath, on the count of three. Ready?”

“Yeah,” Steve affirmed, taking a deep breath and letting Jonathan do whatever he needed to. He trusted Jonathan, more than he trusted anybody, actually, and that should have scared him, but he knew Jonathan would never willingly hurt him. Hell, he’d jumped in front of Billy Hargrove for him. If that wasn’t love – er, *friendship*, then what was it?

Jonathan gripped Steve’s arm tightly, bracing his other hand on Steve’s shoulder, knowing this was going to hurt him. He felt guilty, but he had to get it over with. “One. Two-” Jonathan pooped it back into place with one smooth motion.

“Fuck!” Steve yelled in pain. It was loud enough that Jonathan was sure the neighbors had heard. “I thought you said on three?”

“It hurts less if you don’t tense up like you do when you expect it,” Jonathan explained, slowly letting go of Steve’s arm and retreating to the sink where he ran water over one of the rags.

Steve huffed, gently moving his arm around. Most of the pain was gone, but he had a feeling it was going to ache for a while. “I think it’s fixed.”

“Now for your face.” Jonathan raised the rag but didn’t move forward until Steve nodded at him.

Steve allowed Jonathan to begin cleaning the blood from his face, relishing in the feeling of having Jonathan Byers’s hands on him. It wasn’t like he hadn’t touched him before, but then again, every time he did, Steve got lost in it. Mentally shaking himself from his thoughts, Steve asked, “So, how’d you learn to do that?”

“Do what?” Jonathan asked, scrubbing at Steve’s face, well aware he probably could have done this part on his own, but Jonathan liked taking care of him. He didn’t particularly enjoy examining exactly *why* he liked doing it, but he did.

“Put a shoulder back in place.” It seemed like a strange skill to have acquired, because as far as Steve knew, Jonathan had no plans of being a doctor.

“Uh,” Jonathan looked away from Steve, a frown on his face. He hadn’t really told many people about his past, but he supposed he could trust Steve. “You’re not the only one with a shitty father.”

“Your dad beat you?” Steve was shocked. It made sense, and explained a lot about how Jonathan acted, especially around adults, but never actually thought that was the case.

“On occasion. Whenever he was too drunk or really pissed off,” Jonathan shrugged, like it wasn’t a big deal. He’d gotten used to the fact a long time ago, and even though he felt incredibly vulnerable telling Steve, he wasn’t going to act like it.

Steve didn’t know what to say, so he just stared at Jonathan. Jonathan, the shy, sweet, gentle boy that he’d come to know the past year. Jonathan who had loved Nancy so fiercely and been so heartbroken when she’d left him, but even then, he’d stayed her friend because he cared more about her not feeling guilty than his own pain. Jonathan who was so protective of his family, so affectionate and kind with his little brother, to the point that it melted Steve’s heart. He’d fallen for Jonathan in the past few months and to learn that someone as wonderful as him had been abused, it wasn’t fair.

“I’m sorry.” He wasn’t sure what he was apologizing for. For what Lonnie did to him, or what Steve and his friends did to him, or for all the fights that Jonathan had to drag his ass out of. He was sorry for all of it, but he didn’t quite know how to voice that, so he simply fell silent rather than fight with his tongue to say the right thing.

“S’okay. Better me than Will or my mom, you know?” Jonathan shrugged before going silent again, falling into his own thoughts that were going south really quickly.

Steve wasn’t sure what made him do it, if it was the adrenaline still in his system or the shock of learning part of Jonathan’s tragic backstory, which he had never thought he’d be trusted enough to

learn, but he reached out for Jonathan's face, letting his fingers rest on his cheek. He didn't know what to do, but he wanted to comfort him in some way, to make it a little bit better, but the haze in his head from the fight wasn't letting the words come out right, so all he could do was touch Jonathan, bring him back out of his head any way he could.

"Steve?" Byers croaked out, his throat dry.

"You deserved better." It was the truth. Jonathan deserved a father that loved and supported him. Steve had never met anyone who deserved love more than he did. It was a tragedy that he hadn't been given all the love the world could pour into him since his birth.

"And so do you." Where Jonathan was concerned, Steve's father was just as bad. As far as he knew, he never beat Steve, but Steve was plenty afraid of him, enough to make Jonathan want to corner him in his garage and threaten him with a wrench or something to leave him alone. But he wouldn't, because that wouldn't solve anything. He knew it wouldn't, because Hopper had done the same to Lonnie and all that had happened was Hopper being suspended for a week and Jonathan getting beaten for telling someone, even though he had never told Hopper directly. It wasn't his fault Lonnie wasn't good at hiding bruises and Hopper was a smart man, at least he was when it counted.

"No," Steve shook his head. He didn't, really, he was a pain in the ass, he didn't even try to tread lightly around his father, but even so, his father didn't *hit* him. "I'm sorry."

"You said that," Jonathan pointed out, feeling more than a little uncomfortable with how sincere Steve sounded. It wasn't a bad discomfort, it was just unfamiliar, and Jonathan wasn't sure what to do with that.

"I don't know what else to say."

"You don't have to say anything." He didn't. Just the fact that he listened and didn't judge Jonathan was enough for him. Not many people cared about him, but Steve did, and it meant the world to him.

Steve wanted to pull him closer, to press his lips against Jonathan's and kiss him, slow and gentle to show just how much he did care for him. He wanted to bring him closer, to show him just how in love with him he had become, and with the way Jonathan was looking at him, he was sure he wouldn't be stopped. But he didn't. He couldn't. If he did, there'd be no going back, no changing his mind, and he couldn't. Not yet. He was still hurt over Nancy, still trying to put himself back together, and he wasn't ready to be that vulnerable again, even if it was with Jonathan. Even if he was sure Jonathan would never hurt him that way.

Jonathan deserved better, anyway, he deserved someone who hadn't fucked up every interaction they'd had since grade school. He deserved someone put together and gentle, not reckless and blunt like Steve. He deserved romance and love and stability, not Steve. Granted, if Jonathan made the first move, then he'd go with it, but he wasn't going to be the one to convince him to be his. He didn't have that level of confidence with guys. Girls, sure, that was easy, but guys were different. Well, not really. Okay, so it wasn't guys, it was just Jonathan. Jonathan scared him shitless.

Slowly, he let his hand fall from Jonathan's face, letting his eyes drop to study the smear of blood on his sleeve. No, he couldn't kiss him, not right now. If he was going to make a move, it had to be perfect. *If.*

Jonathan cleared his throat and pulled back, an unreadable expression on his face. He wasn't sure what he wanted Steve to do, but pull away wasn't it. He grabbed a clean rag from the counter and poured alcohol on it, the smell permeating the room and choking him up. He'd never liked the smell of the disinfectant, it was too strong and burned his nose. "I need to disinfect your face, okay? It's going to hurt."

"I can handle it, Byers," Steve huffed, readjusting himself on the lid of the toilet. "Just get it over with."

Jonathan just shrugged and moved closer, taking Steve's face in his hand and stifling a smirk when he felt Steve lean into the touch. He was cute when he thought Jonathan didn't know about his crush. He knew, he was just waiting for Steve to say something, because of

course, there was always the chance that he had it wrong and Steve would stop being his friend if he made a move. He'd lost too many friends when they found out about his sexuality, he couldn't bear to lose Steve, too.

He pressed the rag against the deepest of Steve's wounds. Steve winced and grit his teeth, but otherwise handled himself. He hated this part the most. He had to have a rag that smelled disgusting shoved against his face, causing him pain, when he'd much rather be focusing on how it felt to have Jonathan's hands on him.

After Jonathan was finished he threw the rag in the sink and grabbed for a few bandages while Steve stared at his hands, wondering what it'd be like to have them closed around his own or running across his skin. He shook himself out of it before his thoughts could run away from him. He couldn't just fantasize about Jonathan with him right there.

Steve swallowed, the silence getting to him. He had to break it. "What are you thinking about?" Oh, that was lame as fuck. Great going, Steve.

Jonathan laid the bandages out in a line on the counter, smallest to largest, staring at them intently as he stalled before finally picking up the biggest one and tearing off the paper from the back. He didn't speak until he'd pressed the bandage to the worst cut on Steve's face. Steve marveled at how gentle Jonathan was with him. "I was ten when he first hit me. Up until then he'd been halfway decent. He drank a lot, sure, and got angry and yelled, but he'd never hit me. Not until he found me and Kevin holding hands in my bedroom."

"Who's Kevin?" Tactful, and so not the question he should be asking.

"He was my first-" Jonathan paused, biting his lip and looking at Steve, apprehensively. He didn't want Steve to stop being his friend, but he wanted to tell him. He wanted to know for sure if Steve would leave him, before he got too invested. And it had felt nice having Steve listen to him earlier, he wanted to tell him more, even though every part of him screamed at him to shut up and stop talking.

"Your first boyfriend?" Steve asked, hoping he was right.

Jonathan nodded and took a deep breath. "I've always liked boys and girls, and I guess some part of me knew it was wrong, or at least not allowed, but I didn't think anyone would find out, but he did and..." Jonathan trailed off and shrugged.

"Bastard," Steve bit out.

Jonathan nodded again. Steve hadn't rejected him, so that was good. "He never told my mom, but he never looked at me the same. I think that's why he hit me. And when Will started showing interest in guys, too, he tried going after him, but I wouldn't let him. He'd get drunk and I'd lock Will in one of our rooms to keep him safe. The day he touched Will, grabbed his arm and shoved him against a wall, that was the day I told my mother the truth, about everything. I was so scared, because he'd told me if she found out then she'd leave him and we'd never be able to get by without his money, but I couldn't let him hurt Will, so I told her."

Jonathan closed his eyes for a second before opening them and putting the last bandage on Steve's face. "He was gone the next day. I got a job the next week, working for Benny at his diner washing dishes. It was hard, but we got by. I think my mom blames herself for what happened, but it wasn't her fault."

Steve had listened the whole time Jonathan was speaking, unsure what to say, but very aware of the rage sparking in his chest. He had no idea what to tell someone in that kind of situation. He imagined his father would do something similar should he ever find out about Steve's bisexuality. "Lonnie's a fucking prick."

Jonathan laughed, light and real. "Yeah, he kind of is."

"Want me to go kick his ass?" Steve offered.

"Like you could kick anyone's ass." But Jonathan appreciated the offer. It was sweet of Steve to be angry on his behalf. It made him want to kiss him, and he considered it for a moment, but he decided against it. The moment was a little too heavy for that. "Anyway, I think your face is good now."

"It does feel better. Thank you," Steve said, poking at the bandages

on his face. Thank God it was the weekend, because he couldn't fathom the embarrassment of having to pass Billy in the halls with his face covered in band aids.

"Any time. You know, if you ever need help in a fight, you can always ask me, right?" Jonathan would be there for Steve if he needed him. Truthfully, Jonathan would walk through hell for him if he asked, but he figured taking on Billy Hargrove would be close enough.

"You wanna get your ass kicked for me?" Steve asked, touched.

"I'm sorry, but I distinctly remember showing you firsthand how good a fighter I am." Jonathan regretted the fight, but Steve had said some pretty nasty things, and going after his family or friends was the one thing he couldn't stand.

"You don't play fair."

"Neither did Lonnie," Jonathan said with a laugh.

"Fair point," Steve conceded.

"You gonna be okay?" Jonathan asked with sincerity.

"Yeah. Not the first time I've had my ass handed to me, won't be the last." He got into a lot of fights, and lost almost all of them, but still, he wasn't about to just let someone shout abuse about his friends. Let them say what they wanted about him, but his kids were off limits.

"What time is it?" Jonathan asked, sure more time had passed than they thought. He needed to get home.

"I don't know. We've been in here a while, it's probably late," Steve shrugged.

"Considering it was like, eight when I drug your ass in here? Probably. I should get going." It was late, and his mom was going to get worried.

"Or you could stay." Steve didn't like the idea of Jonathan walking home this late. If he'd had his car, then maybe, but he'd driven

Steve's here, so Steve was pretty sure he was just going to walk. Steve could take him, but he didn't really want to drive, and it was just easier to have Jonathan stay over.

"What?" It would be the first time Jonathan had stayed the night with Steve, and as much as he liked the idea, he wasn't sure it was a good idea. He could crash on the couch, but what if Steve's parents came home in the middle of the night? "What if your parents come home?"

"It's late, Byers. You can't just walk home by yourself," Steve rationalized. "And besides, they won't. And if they do, it won't matter because they never check my room."

Jonathan swallowed. In Steve's room. That probably meant they'd share a bed, and as much as Jonathan wanted to be close to Steve, he wasn't sure he could trust himself not to do something stupid. Like kiss him. "I can take care of myself against Billy."

"It's not Billy I'm worried about." Billy was not the scariest thing in Hawkins, not even close.

Steve had a point. With all the shit that happened in Hawkins, it might not be that great of an idea to walk home at night. "Alright, but I have to call my mom."

Steve quietly sighed in relief, "Good. Now I won't have to worry."

"Aw, Harrington, you worry about me?" Jonathan pressed a hand to his chest and smirked at Steve.

"More than you know," Steve admitted.

Jonathan blushed. And there was that feeling that made Steve wasn't to pull him close and kiss him, but he shoved it down.

"Wanna watch a movie? My parents aren't coming back this weekend, so we've got free reign."

"How often are your parents around?" Jonathan wondered aloud.

"I don't know. Once a week, maybe. Mom's probably at the bar and

Dad's away on business." If his business was fucking random women he found at the airport. Steve's mom only drank to forget, well, everything about her husband, and she'd crash at the hotel if she was too drunk to get home, which was pretty much every night. Steve's father's unfaithfulness drove her crazy, and sometimes Steve felt sorry for her, but mostly he felt cold and indifferent, with a strange longing in his chest that intensified every time he saw Joyce dote on her sons.

Jonathan just sighed and opened the door of the bathroom. He felt bad for Steve, because at least he had his mom. He couldn't imagine being completely alone in the world. Maybe that's why Steve had been so willing to go along with Tommy's bullshit. He was just lonely and being with Tommy had eased that feeling a little. Jonathan couldn't blame him for it, but he could swear to be a better friend to Steve than he'd ever had. "Sure, a movie sounds good."

Steve smiled, "Popcorn?"

"Yeah," Jonathan nodded, smiling back at him with that soft, shy smile that melted Steve's heart.

Maybe he couldn't have Jonathan as a lover just yet, but at least he could have him as a friend. Maybe they could even form a club. The 'My Dad's a Complete Bastard Club.' Sounded plausible.

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading! Let me know if you liked/hated it!

Catch me on tumblr: [freakwithacamera](#)